



Governor Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor



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HOPE, Pre-K remain national leaders

Final bill passes House today; Deal will sign early next week

Georgia's lottery-funded HOPE scholarship and prekindergarten program will continue to be one of the nation's most, if not the most, generous state educational benefits under the state's new plan. The Enduring HOPE legislation cleared its final legislative hurdle today and now moves to the desk of Gov. Nathan Deal, who plans to sign it next week.

"Enduring HOPE will preserve the greatest gift our state has to offer to students and will continue to set Georgia apart on the national level as having one of the most substantial state scholarships for its high-achieving students," said Deal. "Our Pre-K is one of only four universal programs in the nation, putting us in elite company. With the visionary leadership of our Legislature, we have moved these programs from the brink of bankruptcy, closed a gigantic shortfall and placed the lottery-funded programs on firm financial footing. My special thanks today goes to Rep. Doug Collins, one of my floor leaders in the House, who ably carried the torch for this important reform. Doug worked overtime to get this done, and we have a product that makes us all proud."

When considering that Georgia's lottery also provides Pre-K, the state's HOPE program continues to match or exceed the state scholarships offered in other states.

Most comparable to the Peach State's model would arguably be that of Florida. Under the new plan for HOPE, students with a GPA of 3.7 and a SAT score of 1200 or 26 ACT will be considered Zell Miller Scholars and will receive full tuition. In Florida students are required to have a 3.5 GPA but must have a 1270 SAT or a 28 ACT. Furthermore, Georgia students with a 3.0 GPA will now have 90 percent of tuition covered yet Florida's students with the 3.0 GPA will only have 75 percent covered. A certain amount of community service hours is also tacked on to the requirement for both of the scholarship levels in Florida.

In South Carolina, students with a 3.5 GPA and a 1200 SAT or 27 ACT receive up to \$6,700 their first year. Students meeting a 3.0 GPA and 1100 SAT or 24 ACT receive up to \$4,700 per year and students with a 3.0 GPA receive up to \$2,800. South Carolina has also seen higher tuition increases than Georgia, according to the Southern Regional Education Board.

In Tennessee, students with a 3.0 or a 21 ACT get up to \$4,000 a year, and the Volunteer State has higher tuition rates than Georgia.

New Mexico is the only state that covers full tuition, but students do not receive their tuition benefits until the beginning of their second semester. Students are judged on their first semester college performance, which they must pay for in full out of their own pockets. Georgians have eschewed this model because the large upfront cost would prevent many of our best and brightest students from starting college.

Established in 1993 under Gov. Zell Miller, HOPE was the first-in-the-nation of its kind. Facing bankruptcy in 2013, Deal has worked closely with the members of the state House and Senate to ensure the program is saved for future generations. Instead of an unsustainable defined-benefit model, funding for HOPE and Pre-K will now be tied to lottery revenues.

“For over 18 years HOPE has enabled students to attend schools at home and letting the program diminish was not an option here,” the governor said. “The General Assembly and I have developed a plan that aims to continue to keep Georgia’s brightest students on our own turf with hopes that they will thrive here after finishing their education and provide more prosperity for our state in the coming years.”

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